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ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

GRADUATING CLASS OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

At the New National Theatre
Washington, D. C., June 15, 1906

BY

LOUIS P. SHOEMAKER



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YOUNG GENTLEMEN OF THE GRADUATING CLASS OF ST.
JOHN'S COLLEGE:

Christian Brotherhood is synonymous with Christian education; Christian education is synonymous with true modern civilization, and modern civilization is synonymous with American constitutional and representative government as contradistinguished from the republics, the democracies, and the monarchies of the old world.

Other republican and democratic forms of government, such as the Republic of Rome and the Democracy of Athens, as well as those which were not republican in character, have attained great supremacy, through the medium of which millions of people advanced in education, achieved greatness, and accumulated individual, corporate, and national wealth; have become powerful factors in the military and naval spheres of life—versed to a pre-eminent degree in art, science and literature—yet they have deteriorated, lost the advantage thus attained, and some have actually gone into ruin and have been almost forgotten.

True it is that youth, maturity, and decay are as evident and certain in human things as in nature, that the adolescent period of humanity is but the point at which mankind, growing into maturity, must soon begin to deteriorate; true it is we often find exemplified the rule that destruction and death are but the final and unerring limitations placed by God upon all things animate and inanimate. Nevertheless something is constantly teaching us that there exists a factor which can be used, which ought to be constantly used and cultivated, through which more can be done for humanity

ern civilization demand that we excel them in their peaceful pursuits of life and refrain from imitating them in their warlike measures of aggression and destruction? Are we not justified in claiming that this is the purpose of the teaching of the Christian Brothers?

Even if America should excel the old world in achievement in every respect, yet should fail to attain perpetuity, what more, materially, can future generations say of us other than what we now say of the nations of antiquity?

Rome sought, but failed, to be the dominant power of the world. God forbid that the United States should ever become so influenced by power, by wealth, by the presence of a great army and navy, as to attempt any such absurd effort! Yet, our going to the Philippines may be but the indication of a tendency to do just what has led many other great nations into ruin and disaster. How far we are justified under our form of government in continuing to do what we have been doing in those islands is a question we should seriously consider. Already there may be indications (and I think there are) of the fact that we have serious troubles of our own, that the interests of and necessity to promote the general welfare of our own country are sufficiently important to engage the attention and time of our legislators, and that national funds are needed at home for internal improvements.

We have heard that Havana was made sanitary, that the rivers and harbors of Cuba have been dredged, and that similar advantages are being afforded Manila, but we have not as yet, in the whole history of the United States, been able to provide an adequate sewerage system for the District of Columbia, so that its people can observe sanitary laws and regulations, nor have we been

able to secure a sufficient number of public buildings to enable the United States Government to discontinue rented quarters, wholly unsuited for the transaction of governmental business and detrimental to the comfort and health of its employees, nor have we been able to dredge the Eastern Branch, which for more than a hundred years has spread its malarial influence over Washington and impaired the health, not only of its citizens, but of those engaged in Federal business.

Sir William Blackstone tells us in his commentaries that the principle of migration originated in the sending out of colonies to find new habitations when the mother country was overcharged with inhabitants; that it was practiced as well by the Phoenicians and Greeks as the Germans, Scythians, and other northern people. And, so long as it was confined to the stocking and civilization of desert, uninhabited countries, it kept strictly within the law of nature. But how far the seizing of countries already peopled, and driving out or massacring the innocent and defenseless natives, merely because they differed from the invaders in language, in religion, in customs, in government, or in color—how far such a conduct was consonant with nature, with reason, or with Christianity deserved well to be considered by those who have rendered their names immortal by thus civilizing mankind.

That which he said in 1750 of England's treatment of the people of India may also be said of us in 1906 as to our treatment of the people of the Philippine Islands, notwithstanding our form of government and our supposed allegiance to its fundamental principles. When I think of the people of the Philippine Islands, I feel that civil and religious liberty, as well as selfgovernment, should be accorded to them. When I think of the people of the Dis-

trict of Columbia, I feel that the best and most typical republican form of government should be fostered under the auspices of Congress as an example to the rest of our people, rather than one which is un-American in character, spreading un-republican influence over our country.

I can not forget the lessons I have been taught of our Constitution, of the fundamental principles of our Government, and it seems to me I can hear the lingering sound of the voice of that patriot, Patrick Henry, like the continuing tone of the great Bell of Liberty, now in Philadelphia, when he said, "Give me liberty or give me death!" which expression went broadcast over our country and hastened the American Revolution.

If, however, evils do exist, we should eradicate them. If wrongs are being perpetrated, we should patriotically correct them, and the Catholic schools of our country can be relied upon as potent factors for the accomplishment of this result.

That old State House bell is silent.
Hushed is now its clamorous tongue,
But the spirit it awakened
Still is living, ever going.

I had the pleasure of hearing our Secretary of War, Mr. Taft say in Pittsburg two years ago, while delivering an address before the Americus Club, that, in his opinion, the United States Government could not have succeeded to the extent thus far attained in the Philippine Islands but for the influence of the Catholic Church.

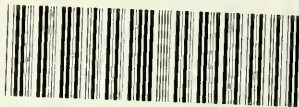
To do this the Catholic Church had no army or navy. It was simply the influence of the Catholic clergy of the islands over the hearts and minds of the people. And so it is here, for the Catholic Church now stands, and will continue to stand, for liberty of capital and of labor, liberty of civil and religious thought and action the very foundation

of our Government—and this may prevent our great cities from going into ruin and decay, as we find to-day Carthage, Athens, Troy, and Antioch. It may continue to give to us and our posterity, not only the blessings we enjoy, but secure perpetuity of our form of government and the continued advancement of our civilization.

You, young men, have been educated to contend for and to maintain the supremacy of this exalted nation. You are expected to go forth into the world with the fundamental principles of the Constitution of the United States fresh in your minds, and the spirit of patriotism implanted in your hearts, with the emblem of your country in one hand and that of your church in the other. Thus, you will afford protection to your country and your church, and being guided by the Constitution of the former and the infallible faith of the latter, you can not fail to afford protection to yourselves and insure for present and future generations civil and religious liberty, prosperity, happiness, and, best of all, perpetuity of these great blessings.

Remember the expression, "My country, right or wrong; if right, to be kept right, if wrong, to be put right." Better that Columbus should never have discovered America, with her fertile valleys, rich mountains, vast and productive plains, beautiful rivers and placid lakes, that her commerce, trade, and wealth should never have been developed, but that she should have remained in the possession of the Indians, than that the great, noble work of the white man and the results of his industry and talent should fail to attain perpetuity.

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